The Black Cat

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Mrs. Hanshy's Twins.
$100 Prize.
F. M. Warwick.

The Ring and the Ostriches.
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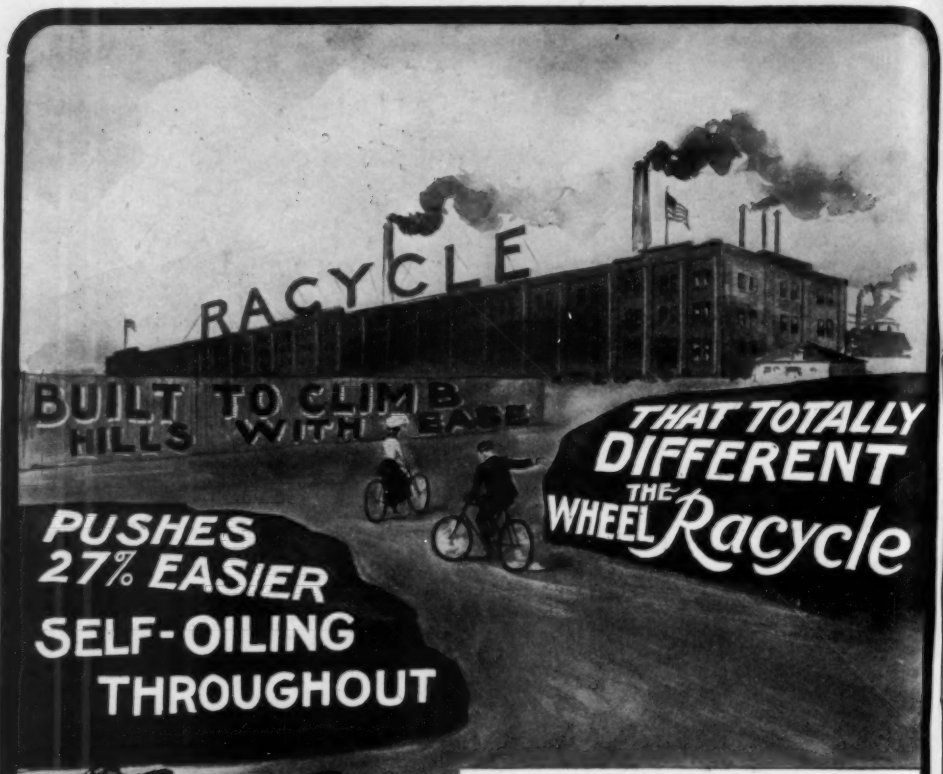

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Mrs. Hanshy's Twins.*

BY F. M. WARWICK.

THE robins had come back from the South to join the woodland chorus of welcome to Spring. The little Whetstone, sometimes dignified by the title of river, had just had its annual boom, and the receding waters had left yellow marks high up on the young trees and shrubbery which fringed the banks. The bottom lands were strewn with the logs and drift of the freshet. The rushing, whirling waters of the week before were settled into calm again and glided along with scarcely an audible murmur, while chattering bluejays swung in the overhanging branches and gratified their vanity with glimpses of their own images mirrored in the placid surface of the stream. The mutability of the seasons meant little more to the half-hundred inhabitants of the Whetstone Valley than the simple changes of the daily routine of life; — chopping, sawing, hewing, and hauling must cease, and the work of plowing, sowing and reaping be taken in turn.

Among the first settlers of this sequestered Valley were Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Hanshy. They had come from "Down East"

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when the Valley was young, when the forest was trackless, save the trail of the Wyandottes, who journeyed back and forth between their Northern Ohio reservation and the nearest trading post. Andrew Hanshy had hewn a home out of the forest. It was a combat of brawn and pluck against the giant oak and the sturdy hickory, but the inanimate foes were forced to yield; the Valley blossomed and bloomed, and the Hanshys were now beforehand and representative of its best citizenship.

The only children of the Hanshys were James and Thomas — twins. If Nature had seemed niggardly by limiting the number of the Hanshy offspring to two, she was profligate in compensation. James Hanshy stood six-feet-five in his stockings, and Thomas, under similar conditions, measured six-feet-three. Mrs. Hanshy insisted that Thomas was two inches shorter than James when born, and the truth of the statement was vouched for by little, wrinkled Dr. Horton. While Mrs. Hanshy prided herself on her impartiality, the two-inch discrepancy in stature frequently influenced her to unconsciously sympathize with Thomas, for in the simplicity of her soul she looked upon him as a dwarf when compared to his taller brother, and she often called him The Little Twin.

Everybody in the Whetstone Valley knew Jim and Tom Hanshy as The Twins; or, as Mrs. Hanshy's Twins, and the sign of the possessive carried with it right and title, for The Twins were as completely Mrs. Hanshy's at twenty-five as when, in their childhood days, the fond mother had soothed them to sleep with crooning lullabies. Her influence still completely dominated their daily lives, and she was the court of last resort when questions of equity arose.

Alexander Sargent, the Yorkshire Englishman who had come into the Valley soon after the Hanshys, used to say that The Twins were alike as two peas, and the applicability of the borrowed phrase was readily admitted by everybody in the Valley. Nell, the only daughter of the Sargents, discovered that the likes and dislikes of The Twins were identical. She had found this out as their playmate, and now that they called on her on alternate Sundays, she could find no reason to change her early-formed opinions. The two young giants were the joint owners of one hundred

and sixty acres of the most fertile land in the Valley, and all mothers in the settlement looked upon either of them as a "good catch." Nell Sargent took conscious satisfaction in the knowledge that she was the only girl in the Valley to whom The Twins paid court, and with the return of Spring she had visions of many a ramble through the fields and forest with Jim and Tom. They had caught the spirit of her fancy for the wild music of the woods, and the flowers she loved best might always safely be regarded as favorites of The Twins. When her blunt old father teasingly asked Nell if she was going to "marry both of Mrs. 'Anshy's Twins" she nonchalantly replied that he would have to consult Mrs. Hanshy on the subject.

It was "meetin' night" in the Valley, and The Twins were gone from home. It was Tom's turn to escort Nell Sargent to the little church which stood on the side of the hill, a mile from the Hanshy farm. Jim had gone alone. Mr. Hanshy was dreaming in the chimney-corner, and he awoke with a start at the unexpected sound of his wife's voice:

"Andrew Hanshy, The Twins are in love."

"So I reckon."

"And you may also reckon, Andrew Hanshy, that it's the worst thing that has happened in our family. We're comin' to a crisis."

Mr. Hanshy reckoned they were.

Mrs. Hanshy was always looking for a crisis, and Mr. Hanshy was not the man to try to relieve her of any gloomy forebodings. He had found it a very satisfactory policy to always agree with her. The management of The Twins had been tacitly conferred upon the mother, and the father never disputed her prerogative. To do him justice, he felt that Mrs. Hanshy would rise to any occasion that presented itself. He never asked questions, made suggestions, or advanced opinions, but listened and acquiesced in all matters arranged by Mrs. Hanshy for the benefit of The Twins. He had some curiosity to know how she would meet the latest crisis, but knew that he would learn all by keeping silent and waiting.

Mrs. Hanshy reckoned that The Twins had "been see-sawin' between the Hanshy and Sargent homes long enough," and Mr.

Hanshy indulged in an acquiescent nod. "Two big boys mustn't keep on sighin' their souls out for one little gal," argued Mrs. Hanshy. "Nell Sargent is good enough to come into our family. I don't just like to see a gal romancin' through the woods half of her time, and Nell's notions about warblin' birds and daisies and blossoms and dogwood bloom are no account to a young woman in this wilderness, but these fanciful things can be got out of her head in time. Anyhow, there ain't a mother of a son in the settlement that wouldn't be proud to have Nell Sargent as a daughter-in-law."

And Mr. Hanshy agreed with her. As a matter of fact, he liked Nell Sargent. She was the belle of the Valley, but, best of all, the father of The Twins liked Nell's vivacity; she was a revelation to him, and he admired the spirit that could put so much life into a wilderness in which he had found nothing but dreary toil. When Mrs. Hanshy decided that she would meet the crisis in the morning, her husband knew what it meant. One of the twins must cease his attentions to Nell Sargent. He silently wondered upon which one the blow would fall, but he feared the worst for Jim.

The next morning found Mrs. Hanshy dreading the task she had set herself, but she was as resolute in her purpose as ever, and at the first opportunity addressed herself, point-blank, to the two stalwart sons.

"James and Thomas Hanshy, I've a disagreeable duty to perform, but we can't meet a crisis by hemmin' and hawin'. It's mighty unfortunate that Nell Sargent wasn't a twin. I've wished she was a hundred times; but she isn't, and you can't both have her; she's for only one of you."

Two young giants stood blushing before the mother whose every suggestion had been law to them, and from whose verdict there was no appeal. Their powerful frames quivered in every muscle while the little woman put the finishing touches to the seal of their fate. No stern judge was ever more deliberate in pronouncing sentence upon a prisoner at the bar than was Mrs. Hanshy when she concluded:

"James Hanshy, I'm terrible sorry for you — more sorry than I can tell."

And Jim understood. Stepping over to his mother, he caught her little round face between his two big, sun-browned hands and, stooping, pressed a kiss to her lips. Turning to Tom, he gave him a hearty shake of the hand and then walked out of the house, to begin the duties of the day. Mrs. Hanshy knew that the incident was closed, and would never be referred to again. The Twins had never questioned her right to decide between them in all things, and they never discussed her rulings.

It was Sunday again — Jim's Sunday — but Tom knew what was expected of him. He feared that Nell would ask why Jim didn't come, and he was greatly relieved when she did not mention the Big Twin's absence. She knew, intuitively, that something had happened "up at Hanshy's," but she would spare Tom, as she would have spared Jim. Was she sorry? She knew she would miss Jim, but Tom's absence would have been a source of equal regret to her under similar circumstances. But if Nell Sargent was troubled by conflicting emotions, nobody ever knew it.

Time grew apace, and Gossip took wings and flew through the Whetstone Valley with the message that Nell Sargent and one of Mrs. Hanshy's Twins were to be married. But Gossip didn't wait for full particulars, and when asked "which one?" was unable to give a definite answer.

Tom told Jim of his approaching marriage in June, and the information was accepted as a matter of course. Tom and Nell were to ride to the county-town to have the ceremony performed, and all the people of the Valley, young and old, were to be invited to the Sargent home for a feast and frolic, a welcome to the returning bride and groom.

. . . . . .

The gleam of a perfect June morning was over everything; the sweetness of the clover fields was everywhere. Jim was on hand to bid Tom and Nell godspeed. He lifted Nell into the saddle. He saw them ride away; and then he stood, motionless, gazing after them until they reached the turn in the road, when he walked on to the Hanshy home.

It was afternoon, and the bride and groom would soon return. Mr. and Mrs. Hanshy were leaving for the Sargents'. Jim was not ready to go down. The little mother looked at him with

more compassion than she had shown since deciding that The Little Twin should have Nell Sargent. He was quick to read her heart, and he stooped and kissed her.

The Valley folks were gathering at the Sargent home, but Jim could not go down — not yet. He wandered down the road, in the direction from which the bride and groom would come. They were not in sight. He thought of the happy days with Nell. He turned from the road, and was soon on the banks of the Whetstone. He was a boy again, and Nell was with him. He ran down the steep embankment, catching a branch here and a branch there as he went, to keep from falling headlong, and he fancied he could hear Nell laughing at the grotesque spectacle he presented. The murmuring ripples sang of Nell. Bending over, he dipped his hand into the water and drew it back and forth, remembering how pretty Nell's hand had looked when she had allowed the water to thus run, sparkling, through her fingers. He climbed up the bank and found the big beech tree, with "Nell" and "Jim" cut into the bark. And then he wondered if the bride and groom were coming.

Going back to the road, Jim saw the dancers whirling about on the raised platform, under the wide-spreading branches of the big oak which stood in front of the Sargent home; and he now and then caught a note from old man Hardy's screechy fiddle. But Tom and Nell were not coming. Why were they late? And then he thought of the briar-patch, beyond the cloverfield, where the wild roses were in bloom. He would get a bouquet for the bride. And as Jim Hanshy plucked the roses he communed with himself:

"I wonder where I'd've been today if Tom'd been The Big Twin? And what would Tom be doing now? Would he be watching for someone to come down the road he didn't want to see? No, he wouldn't! That wouldn't be like Tom. Tom wouldn't hang around here and make me feel like I'd robbed him! But what could he do? Perhaps he'd mount the fastest horse on the place and ride — and ride — and — and — never — come — back; or, maybe he'd — "

A rattlesnake sounded its chivalrous warning. Jim figured that it was but a few feet away, and he knew it was coiled, ready to strike. It gave him an idea; his brain whirled; and he thought

quickly. Dropping upon his knees, he closed his eyes and, thrusting out the hand which held the wildflowers, in the direction from whence came the warning, he waited — but only for a moment. He felt the fangs of the reptile sink into his flesh, and he jumped to his feet. Tightly grasping his wrist above the wound, to arrest circulation, Jim walked slowly toward the house. There was no hurry, the poison would do its work fast enough, when released.

The merrymaking at Sargents' was still in progress, but Tom and Nell had not returned. Once, now half afraid he would see them, Jim looked down the road again. He had found a pencil and a scrap of paper, and had written all he cared to say. He caught the echoes of laughter from Sargents' and he heard Hardy's screechy fiddle, but he was weary and faint. He would lie down to rest, to rest and dream — dream of Tom's bride.

. . . . . .

Back from the little church which stood on the side of the hill were Tom and Nell Hanshy. Their lashes were wet with the tears that came unbidden as they covered the new mound of clay at their feet with the sweetest flowers they could find in all the Valley. At the Hanshy home sat the father, silently watching the lengthening shadows of a summer Sunday afternoon. The little mother was listlessly leafing her Bible, hoping to come across some passage that would bring solace to her heart. A scrap of paper, released from the pages of the book, fluttered to the floor at the woman's feet. She picked it up, read, and then re-read it to her husband:

DEAR TOM:

All that is mine I leave for you — for you and Nell.

JIM.

"Andrew Hanshy," said the little woman, "that's The Big Twin's will."

"So I reckon."

The Ring and the Ostriches.*

BY FRANK RUSSELL.

BILLY NUTZEL and me wus trappin' and huntin' down here together in Patagonia for 'bout three year, an' had got a thunderin' big lot of furs an' skins. Billy sez to me one day, as how it 'ud be best to take 'em to 'Frisco and sell 'em there, as we couldn't git half the wuth of 'em here, an' besides we oughter have a bit of a spell, anyway, so I says *bueno*, we'll go. We hit the trail fur Punta Arenas, where nearly all our furs wus, and where we'd have to ketch a boat.

There wusn't nothin' but these cargo tramp steamers in the Straits then, and the feller in the office there sez as how no boat won't come for a while, so we puts up at the *Gaucho* Hotel, run by a Austriaka, to wait till she happened along.

We'd been in this shack a couple o' days, an' one evenin' I wus down in the barroom, havin' a quiet time by myself, when all of a sudden I hears Billy, yellin' fer me to come there quick. Well, I grabs my old 44, thinkin' he's in seri's trouble, and tears back to his room.

"Sit down," sez he, "I got a bally good scheme."

I stowed away the gun, disgusted, and gave 'im some advice 'bout frightinin' people with heart trouble, which he took no notis uf.

"Look here," he sez, "we're goin' ter make our forchin this trip, shore. We'll rig up a couple o' inkybaters, and fill 'em with awstrich eggs, an' 'bout the time we git to 'Frisco they'll be nearly ready to hatch, an' we can sell 'em alive to these rich sports, and mebbe some to a circus or menagery. They'll fetch a fat price, an' we'd oughter git a pile o' coin out uv 'em."

Billy wus proper *loco* 'bout this scheme, an' kep' tellin' it over an' over agin, an' laffin' an' whackin' the table with his fist, an' plannin' how we'd spend the money, 'til blamed if he didn't git me

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roused up, too, an' so I said we'd give it a trial, bein's it 'ud cost nothin'.

I'd never seen a inkybater on dooty before, but Bill he'd been on a farm up in Santa Fé, where there wus lots uv 'em, and then he's a mighty handy chap with the tools, is Bill, so betwixt us both we rigged up a couple of big boxes, and got some sperit lamps off'n a schooner, an' put some rings in the boxes so's to hang 'em up in the boat with ropes, to keep 'em from rockin' in bad weather.

That took a couple o' days, an' then we started out in camp with the hosses an' some cargo baskets with wool in 'em, to fetch the eggs. You know how plentiful is awstrich eggs now in December? Well, they's a lot more plentiful them days, an' we got the hosses loaded in no time.

Bill's wunnerful brain wus gittin' us richer an' richer every minit. He reckoned we'd stay in 'Frisco 'til the burds got a good size, an' then break 'em in to pull pony-carts. That way they'd fetch several hun'rd dollars apiece. Bill reckoned he'd git married, and buy the biggest saloon in 'Frisco fur his privit use and his friends.

We got the eggs to Punta Arenas, and filled up the inkybaters. Betwixt 'em they held more'n four hundred. All over the outside of the boxes we painted in Spanish and English "Handle with care" an' "Delikit contents."

Purty soon the old boat hove in sight — Englishman she wus, 'bout five thousand tons. We piled all our furs an' skins, and the awstrich factory aboard a cargo barge, and the harbor launch towed it alongside the steamer. Bill climbed up on deck an' wus shoutin' out to the sailors to be careful, an' to heave easy, 'til we got the whole crew lookin' over the rail to see whut's up.

When ever'thing wus aboard, Bill went 'round to the first mate, tellin' 'im 'bout our inkybaters, an' paid 'im ten dollars to let us put 'em up for'ard in an empty storeroom. So we drove some big staples in the celin' an' swung up the boxes.

Ever'thing wus goin' so easy that me an' Bill wus gettin' more confident in the scheme ev'ry minit. Bill wanted to go first class, bein's we's due to be so wealthy pretty quick, but I explained that we wusn't proper dressed fur first-class passengers, and second wus plenty good. We'd allus gone third before.

A woman and two kids wus the only other passengers on board, 'cause in them days mighty few people went up the west coast.

That second class wus swell, you bet. Ever' time we went to feed, they'd give us a piece of paper tellin' what we wus goin' to have to eat, and they'd just bring us one thing at a time. Then they had these 'lectric lights inside o' little bottles, you know; an' Bill wus allus a turnin' them off an' on, till he busted one, and man, wusn't he in a fright! But a feller in a white coat said it jest burnt out, and he'd bring another one.

Ever' day Bill 'ud go for'ard two or three times to inspect the inkybaters an' fix up the lamps. The foc'sle wus mighty anxious as to what we had in them boxes, an' one day a fireman opened up one uv 'em to git wise, but Bill caught 'im inside and durned near corpsed 'im, so the sailor chaps didn't prowl around no more.

We figgered the eggs 'ud hatch out 'bout a week after we got to 'Frisco, an' I reckon they would have, too; but when we got up here to Callao an' loaded a bit of cargo, a feller, with a bunch of soldiers, come aboard, an' said the plague had broke out an' we gotter stay in quarantine.

Well, the plague got wuss an' wuss, an' we had to lie there for three weeks befo' we got away, an' the cap'in uf the boat wasn't half as mad as me an' Bill 'cause we foresees that the awstriches are going ter hatch on board an' cause trouble.

After we left Callao, we couldn't git inter any other port 'til after a bunch of uffishuls had nosed round fur a couple of days, an' finally the cap'in sez that we'd be two months behind time when we got to 'Frisco.

One mornin' jest befo' we got to Panama, Bill had a look at the eggs an' comes back madder'n a fresh-sheared ram. He says, "The awstriches are comin'."

Well, fur nigh a week Bill 'ud go in ever' few hours an' fetch out a new detachment of awstriches, till the for'ard deck, an' down in the steerage wus covered with 'em.

We hired the carpenter to make crates for 'em, an' it kep' 'im working overtime to keep up with the demand. Bill wouldn't let me do nothin', said he's a proper burd financeer, an' wus goin' ter keep herd on 'em hisself.

The cap'in wus a bit sore 'bout this sudden cargo o' livestock,

but Bill giv 'im a roll of fox skins an' a guanaco capa, an' some furs to the other officers, so they's Bill's friends then, an' the first mate told the cook to save all the leavin's an' put 'em in a basket outside the galley, where Bill could get it handy to feed the chicks.

Out o' the whole lot o' eggs nearly four hundred hatched; but a few died, so we had 'bout three hundred an' sixty left. An' you oughter seen 'em grow! At first they's all head an' legs, the size of pat'idges, but in three weeks they's as big as turkeys, an' the carpenter had to keep on the keen jump to make bigger boxes fur 'em.

The cap'in promised Bill he could turn 'em out on deck ever' Sat'day fur a run-a-roun', an' when he'd open the boxes they'd be all over the deck, for'ard an' aft, in five minits.

They's great han's to swaller things, — burnt matches, cigarette stumps, buttons, an' bits of iron, an' they wus allus pickin' at nail heads an' bolts an' spots o' paint. Bill 'ud lean back on one o' them cloth chairs, an' smile an' watch 'em fur hours at a time. Then sometimes he'd tie a piece of meat to a string an' hike round the deck, with a bunch of little awstriches follerin' after 'im. He took more pride in 'em than a mother could in her kids.

One Sat'day Bill let 'em loose, and they's a-scamperin' 'round deck for mor'n two hours, when I hears a yell from aft. I thought one of them kids with the woman had fell overboard, so I tears back along the deck, shuckin' off my coat, an' I sees the woman hot-footed after a awstrich, but it gets mixed up with the crowd and they all run for'ard together. I asks her whut's the trouble, an' she begins to cry an' says the awstrich has done swallered her dimin' ring, and that Bill has got to cut 'em all open till he finds it. I told her I'd seek Bill and see what he sez, and started off, and she looks for the cap'in.

Bill wus proper wild. He cussed that woman in English an' Spanish fur five minits runnin', an' then went aft to have a confab with 'er. The cap'in and a bunch o' lackeys wus standin' alongside uv 'er, tellin' her it wus easy to git the ring back, an' she must quit cryin' an' tell how it happened.

She sets forth that she left the ring on 'er toilet stand, an' went up on deck for a walk. When she come back the awstrich wus standin' in her room, an' she druv 'im back upstairs, an' when she

went to git the ring it wus gone, so she chases the burd till they git mixed up together. She reckons there's only one thing to do, an' that's to git a knife an' examine 'em all inside, till we gits the right one. Ever'body knowed how bad the awstriches wus 'bout swallerin' things, spechully shiny things, so of course we thought the ring wus inside one of the burds.

"How much is this here ring wuth?" sez Bill. "I'll pay you fur it."

But the woman sez it wus a present from her first husband, an' had a dimin' in it as big as her thumb, an' she wouldn't take a thousand dollars fur it.

Well they jawed fur an hour, till Bill thinks of a scheme to git the ring without slaughterin' the burds; so he hustles round fur the doctor to make 'em sick, but they wouldn't divulge the ring that 'ere way. We sees right off that this scheme is no good, and Bill sez:

"Suppose we leave 'em fur a few days, an' mebbe we'll have terrible rough weather, an' they'll git seasick, an' fling up the ring." Ever'body nacherally roared, 'cept the woman — she got proper red-headed.

"You're gittin' right foolish," she sez to Bill. "Them burds gotter be bisected right off."

Bill sees there's nothin' else to do, so we gits a knife each, an' begins the investergation. The woman follers, too, 'lowin' she's goin' to watch that we look good. I wus to do the killin' an' skinnin' ('cause the skins wus wuth a good bit) an' Bill an' the woman wus goin' ter do the prospectin'.

We worked all that day, killin' an' skinnin' and prospectin', an' found ever'thing in the world inside uv 'em 'cept the ring. Bill could 'a' chewed scrap iron he's that mad, an' told the woman he didn't believe she had no ring.

When he sez this, she snaps her teeth like a mad seal, and jest nacherally sails inter Bill with the slickest lot o' strong language I ever hears. You bet he don't cast no more remarks at 'er.

We started again the next mornin', an' pretty soon had all the awstriches killed 'cept five, an' still no ring in sight. It wus like drawin' to a straight flush — the off card is allus at the bottom of the pack. Bill was nearly cryin' when we fetched

the last five of 'em. He'd pat 'em on the neck an' hold 'em to his jaw like a baby.

"Fire ahead," sez the woman. "It'll sho be in one of 'em." The crew had heard that there wus only five left, so they all gathered 'round to see the finish.

First burd, — no ring; second, third, an' fourth, — no ring; an' so we killed the last survivor, an' found nothin' unusual 'cept a collar button.

'Bout that time here comes them two bally little kids, on the hot jump.

"We found yer ring under the bed, mommer," one of 'em hollered.

Well, I thought Bill wus a-goin' to massaker the whole crowd. He jumped up on a for'ard hatch, flung his hat overboard, an' cussed fur twenty minits, without takin' breath, an' done a proper war dance the whole time.

"If any you gangle-legged shakes wants to champeen this here female, let 'im 'proach to 'is death, an' I'll mash his face like a spiled pertater," he howled out; but everybody was safe under cover, an' he had the boat to hisself.

After 'while he got tired an' set down, but still a-cussin', so I went out to 'im to pacify 'im.

"Don't take it so hard, Bill," I sez, "We'll be in 'Frisco pretty soon, an' then we can go back to Patagonia fur anuther crop of awstrich eggs.

And that's why we're here.

Through the Mirror.*

BY CHARLES H. PLUMMER.

NLY fifteen dollars offered for this fine old mirror! It is preposterous, gentlemen!" And the auctioneer looked his disgust. "Why, I would be ashamed to stand there looking the thing in the face, after offering that paltry sum. The bump of reverence seems to be sadly lacking in this crowd. No doubt many beautiful women have been reflected in this mirror in some grand old parlor. Think of it! If mirrors had memories like human beings, what a beautiful story this one might be able to tell. Perhaps, to a young man of romantic turn, it could picture forth his ideal. It is worth double the price for its possible associations. Just the thing for a bachelor's den. Come, give the bachelors a chance."

The good-natured ones around the auctioneer's stand smiled their appreciation of this voluble sally. Some one in the crowd remarked: "He's all right, he's a slick one. Give him a bid."

For a moment the bidding was brisk. Then came the warning: "This is the third and last time, gentlemen. I am offered twenty dollars. Anybody go twenty-one?"

No one answered, and down came the gavel with a bang. "Sold! The lucky gentleman gets it for twenty dollars. Ten to one the gentleman is a bachelor. Am I right, sir?"

"Yes," I replied, "and you guess as well as you auctioneer."

In this way I bought the mirror, and had it sent to my apartments. It was one of those pier glasses, somewhat antiquated nowadays, with a marble base about eighteen inches from the floor. The gilt molding was a little tarnished, but that did not matter. I detested obtrusive new furniture, and when in need of an odd piece, purposely bought old to preserve the mellow effect. That night I put it into place between two bookcases.

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It takes very little to supply me with dream food. As I sat in a comfortable Morris chair opposite my new possession, indolently watching the reflection of the cigar smoke, ascending in delicate tracery of rings and spirals, the auctioneer's words came back and took hold of my imagination. Suppose mirrors had memories. Fabulous legend tells of many mirrors possessed of wonderful qualities. There was Lao's mirror that reflected one's thoughts; Cambucan's mirror foretold the approach of ill-fortune; in Reynolds's one could see what was done a mile off; and Vulcan had a mirror that showed the past, present and future. Of course, these were only fairy tales, but still, when one is in the mood, it is just such stuff that affords relaxation after poring over a lot of dry law books.

I lay back in the chair and closed my eyes, allowing my thoughts to roam. In the course of its existence this quaint old glass had certainly stood a silent spectator at many phases of the human comedy. Like an old man, it had a story to tell. If it could only embody that story on its surface again, what would be its nature? Would it be comic, dramatic, or tragic, or simply an impressionistic sketch without beginning or end? Perhaps it would all depend on the one who looked into it. All in a very short lapse of time, much of this kind of philosophy went coursing in kaleidoscopic medley with my imagination.

As I opened my eyes to give a little much-needed attention to the cigar, I was struck by the appearance of a blur in the center of the mirror, just as if some one had blown his breath upon it. It first looked like a defect, and I was chagrined at not having noticed it before. But no, as I intently watched, the blur grew, and in a few moments the whole glass was covered as with a light frost. I was amazed. The wildest kind of thoughts flashed across my mind. Was I dreaming, or were those fabulous legends not so fabulous after all?

I got up quickly and, going over to the mirror, tried to cleanse it with my handkerchief. But it was no use. It made not the slightest impression, and I put my handkerchief in my pocket, while a sense of impending mystery kept my eyes fixed upon this curious phenomenon. Though it seemed a long time, in reality it could not have been over a minute I stood thus, before a change

was again noticeable. This time the frost was evaporating. What would I see when the mirror became clear? Again the words of the auctioneer came to me. They were only spoken in a spirit of banter, but instinctively I felt there was something in them. I felt confident I should not see the prosaic reflection of my own face and room. And this expectancy was founded on more than idle fancy. There was the frost that the handkerchief failed to wipe away, and, more wonderful still, the peculiar manner in which the frost evaporated. When one blows one's breath on a glass the resulting blur starts to fade away from the edge towards the center, but this was doing directly the opposite. It was fading away from the center towards the edge. These things were to be explained, and I knew that I could not explain them.

At last the glass was as clear as though nothing unwonted had ever happened to it, and I found myself looking down the length of a large and beautifully furnished parlor. Prepared as I was for something out of the ordinary, the reality somewhat startled me. But I quickly threw this off and determined to enjoy the situation as though such things occurred every day.

From the view I got of the place, it was reasonable to suppose I was looking into the room from a situation between the two front windows. This was no doubt correct, the mirror being a pier glass. At this point my speculations were cut short by a phenomenon more surprising than any that had gone before. In through the folding doors came a young girl of perhaps twenty. Turning on her heel in the center of the floor, she came tripping down the room towards me, glide-waltz fashion, holding her skirt up archly in either hand, just enough to show two twinkling little feet, while a coquettish smile played over her face. I have never seen anything half so graceful or half so innocently playful. Familiar as that face afterwards became to me, and burnt indelibly as it now is upon my memory, I cannot describe its elusive beauty, at once tender and roguish.

My first thought as she entered the room was whether she could see me in the mirror as I could see her. I was not left long in doubt as to this. Perhaps not looking for anything out of the ordinary, she was not quick to notice any peculiarity about so familiar a piece of furniture. She soon discovered it, however, and

her vain little gambol, meant only for private eyes, came to a sudden termination, much to my sorrow. A mingled look of wonder and fright chased the smile from her face. I expected her to turn and run from the room. Not a bit of it. Though timid, she was brave, and she stood her ground courageously.

It could not have been long we stood facing each other, and I was just about to smile or do something to assure her I was no hobgoblin, when the small spot of frost began to form on the mirror again. Very small at first, it grew with incredible rapidity, and soon the glass was completely covered, effectually cutting off my view, and leaving me with a blank look of annoyance upon my face.

I sat up late that night. Revolve the thing in my mind as I would, I could make neither head nor tail of it. In the light of later events, I have arrived at my own conclusion, but it may not be accepted by all.

Four successive nights were spent far into the small hours, anxiously watching the mirror lest it repeat its odd behavior in my absence. A dinner and a dance engagement were broken, and all without avail. Nothing occurred to show that it was in any way different from other mirrors. All hope of ever seeing that winsome face again was lost. Even the fact of once having seen it was on the verge of being relegated to the limbo of pipe dreams. On the fifth night, my doubting Thomas was laid to rest.

It must have been about eleven o'clock, and I was on the point of giving up this useless vigil in despair, when, almost unawares, my patience was rewarded. The frost re-appeared, spread rapidly, and slowly faded away again before my astonished gaze, leaving me rudely staring into the quizzical face of my mirror girl.

The humor of the situation burst upon us simultaneously. Shaking a dainty but threatening finger at me, her accusing attitude seemed to say, "Ha, ha! caught peeping again, bold man." And I assumed an indignant look which expressed the rebuttal, "Caught peeping yourself, saucy girl!" Thereupon we both smiled guiltily. This is the only introduction we ever received, nor was any other ever needed, for it immediately placed us upon a friendly footing. The only thing now required was some means of communication.

I somehow knew it could not be done vocally. However, I tried, and she tried too. I saw her lips move; but it conveyed no sound to either of us. No, evidently this would not do. Another method must be devised. Some paper and a pencil lying on a table close at hand supplied the clue. Her eyes, following mine, discovered my intention, and she ran out of the room with a reassuring nod that she would not be gone long. Shortly she came back in an excited little fluster, with paper and pencil of her own. I held up what I had written in her absence: "Can you understand this curious situation?" After moistening the pencil in her mouth, she held up her paper as I had done: "No, I can't, can you!" Alternatingly holding up what we wrote, the following conversation ensued. I led off with this bit of Stoic philosophy: "Since we can't explain it, suppose we accept gracefully what the gods send us."

"A very sensible suggestion, and I am agreed," she wrote back. "It will be all sorts of fun."

"I am glad you enter into the spirit of the thing," I scribbled. "I was afraid you wouldn't."

"Do I look such a curmudgeon?" This was held up, accompanied by an exaggerated air of offended geniality.

"Not in the least," I hastened to assure her, "but the circumstances are so unusual, you know."

"That is just what makes it interesting."

"I think so too."

After a short pause, she wrote again: "Do you think the mirror will give us any more of these interviews?"

"It has happened twice," I replied, "and I firmly believe it will continue to do so until something we know nothing of interferes."

"Can't you think of some other way for future use, then? Talking with the pencil grows tiresome after the novelty wears off. Besides, writing material always scares away what I want to say."

"No, have been turning the thing over in my mind, and I can't think of anything better."

"We might talk deaf and dumb," she suggested, tentatively.

Here my motions of approbation were so vigorous that the paper dropped out of my hand. She was amused at my enthu-

siasm. Picking up the paper, I wrote hurriedly, "The very thing! I never once thought of it before. Do you know anything about it?"

"Very little now, I am afraid," was her doubtful answer. "I really believe I have forgotten the alphabet."

"It can soon be picked up again if you have once known it," was my encouraging response. "We boys used it in school to talk behind our teacher's back. I was quite proficient in the art then, and I don't suppose it would take me long to brush up again."

"Poor teacher," she commented dolefully. "But how are we to go about this 'brushing up,' as you call it?"

"In the Encyclopædia Britannica there is a very good illustration of the alphabet. I got all I know from that. With this as a guide, and a little practice, we should get along very well."

Going over to the bookcase, I got the required volume and came back to the mirror. The place was easily found, and standing close to the glass, we both looked into the book, my finger designating the double-handed alphabet. A nod from her assured me that this was also the one she had once known, and bade me go on with my instruction. I laid the book down and proceeded to explain. "We had better get a few letters at a time by heart, or rather by hand, and then practice doing them without the book."

This scheme progressed with surprising ease. What I had forgotten came back readily, while my pupil's memory was equally apt. In a short time we got letter perfect down to M. I had been dreading to see the frost spot for some time past; welcome as a prelude but tantalizing as a climax. Just when we were about to begin on N it made its appearance. It behaved precisely as before, and there I was alone in front of a reflection of myself, the encyclopædia in my hand, a pencil stuck over one ear and bits of paper strewn over the floor.

The next day was a very busy one for me; but at every spare interval a number of persistent questions kept plaguing me for an answer. Who was this girl? Did she have a corporeal existence independent of the mirror? If so, would it be possible for me to know her in that corporeal existence? I saw now that it might have been possible to have found this out by simply having ques-

tioned her last night, if I had only thought of it. At any rate, I would not fail to do so at my first opportunity.

In the evening, I watched the mirror for the familiar sign with renewed zest. There was a likelihood that I should see nothing tonight; nevertheless that did not deter me, for the thing was becoming absorbing now. It was well I was so persistent. Without giving me the long, tedious wait of the previous night, the phenomenon sprang into existence like a demonstration in magic. Both of us were used to this now, however, so when it had passed away, we greeted each other with a glad smile as friends do, minus the handshake of course. Beyond a doubt she had devoted considerable of her time during the day to the rejuvenation of her lost art of the deaf and dumb language. She immediately proceeded to spell out a few simple words for my edification. After looking properly impressed, and replying a little in kind, I signified that there was something I wished to say with pencil.

"There is something we neglected last night which might have saved us from going to this trouble about the deaf and dumb business," I wrote.

"What is it? So sorry you consider the deaf and dumb 'business' a trouble," came her supercilious note, held up in a disdainful hand.

"You misunderstand me." At this point I endeavored to look as contrite as possible. "I mean if we only knew each other in real life, and not simply through this queer mirror, all that would be unnecessary, don't you see? We could see each other whenever we pleased, and hold our little tête-à-têtes in a more natural manner."

"But how do you know I would care to hold tête-à-têtes with you in a more natural manner?" This she wrote to tease me, I suppose.

"I was only speaking for myself," I returned. "At least you owe me this to prove yourself not a coquette." On her next piece of paper was written, "I bow before your logic."

"I will write my name and address," I directed, "and you can write yours. Then, when you feel that you would like to have a real tête-à-tête you might send me a note by mail. We can outwit this mirror yet."

But I was mistaken. We could not outwit it. When our names and addresses were written, we attempted to hold the papers up for inspection. But even while our hands were making the motion, the mirror drew its curtain of frost before our astonished eyes, abruptly preventing the exchange. The failure to give warning by the appearance and growth of the frost spot was an unprecedented demonstration. And it should have taught us that further effort to establish any other relation than the one it chose to grant us would prove futile. Nevertheless, on the succeeding night, being again favored by the mirror, we made a second attempt to exchange names, but again we were frustrated in the same manner as previously.

There was but one other way for me to discover who she really was, and that way was to find out who had formerly owned the mirror. On the morning following the last failure, I went to see the auctioneer from whom I had bought the mirror. I found that he did not get it from a private party, as I had supposed, but from a storage and trust company. The clerk, who gave me this information, also told me that the mirror was put in their place for sale at the same time with a lot of other household goods. I got the date of this transaction from him, and thanked him for his trouble.

The manager of the storage and trust company was less communicative than the affable clerk. Of course I said nothing to him about the mirror, for he would have thought me crazy. Even as it was, he must have put me down as a most inquisitive fellow. After I had given him the name of the auctioneer, and the date on which the furniture was put in his place for sale, he shortly informed me that these goods had belonged to a client of theirs who was now on the continent with his family. Was there anything else he could do for me? Yes, he could give me the gentleman's name. But this he politely, though firmly, declined to do. My curiosity concerning the furniture I had bought would not justify him in breaking the rules of the company and their client's instructions. Further importunity on my part only elicited his promise to forward a letter for me to the gentleman's continental address. Later in the day I handed him a sealed letter in which was a full account of my peculiar experience with the mirror up to date.

Since this was the best that could be done, I was forced to wait patiently until a reply came. I was certain the girl was a member of the family that had owned the mirror — I could not account for her appearance in it else — and now I felt reasonably sure I had traced her successfully. It was strange to think that while the girl herself was, perhaps, in some far-off country, something, I knew not what, could appear in my glass. Whatever the real girl was, I felt that the mirror girl was different. But I could not define the difference at that time.

From this time on the mirror favored us every night. In fact, frequency of occurrence seemed to lend it facility. And, as it had metaphorically frowned down any attempt to circumvent it, we tacitly discontinued our efforts in this direction.

Neither did I say anything to her of the inquiries I had made at the auctioneer's or the trust company, nor what else I had discovered. I felt as one who is keeping a rich secret towards the day when it is to be launched as a great surprise.

We worked diligently at the deaf and dumb language for a week, and at the expiration of that time we were able to converse freely. They were pleasant evenings we spent after having accomplished this much. I learned that the moods of the mirror girl were as infinitely various as the states of the atmosphere. All of them were sweet and winning. Even her rainy-day phases were almost examples of fair weather.

On one occasion I found the parlor empty when the frost cleared off the glass. This did not trouble me at first, as it had often happened before. But after waiting for at least ten minutes without being rewarded by her appearance in the room, I became anxious lest the mirror were about to play me some new trick. Not at all. Presently a roguish head and a pair of laughing blue eyes peeped out from behind a large arm chair. Seeing that she was discovered, she jumped up, very much pleased with the success of her little joke. This was one of her ways, and it always gave her pleasure to mystify me with some such odd little conceit. And, to tell the truth, I was getting very fond of having these roguish jokes played upon me.

It was not always night in the phantom room I saw in the mirror. Sometimes the place would be filled with bright sunshine,

which, I suppose, came in through the two windows on either side of the pier glass; while my library would be illuminated by the artificial light of the gas jets. The effect was most curious. At such times I usually found her employed with some piece of embroidery or fancy work. She was exceedingly skilful at such things. For long periods, I would sit silently watching her deft fingers glide in and out of the material. If I expressed my admiration for her work, which I always did, she would naively explain the simple rules governing its construction. Many were the valuable lessons I received in the gentle art of needlework. After one of her graphic demonstrations, shading and padding lost most of their vaunted mystery; and any mere man could have seen the decided advantage that couching had over the netting stitch method. Had it not been for the fear of losing caste, I would have taken up the work myself, just for the pleasure of being under such a teacher.

I was invariably required to recite my lesson after it was over. She would ask questions, and I would answer them to the best of my ability. We called this our correspondence method. By dint of much coaching, I would get through them somehow, but over some absurd mistake, she could not keep back the laugh that would out. "Poor boy," she would console in deaf and dumb, "I don't suppose it does come to you by second nature, but never mind, you are doing wonderfully well, for a man."

Yes, I was getting on very well, but at the same time, I was losing that which I had never thought to lose; and to what? to whom?

All this was in the lighter vein, and perhaps it would have been well if I had delved no deeper, or not so deep. It is a poor miner, however, who will not work out a paying lode of gold.

I had always thought the deaf and dumb language a most ungraceful mode of communication before I saw her do it. But her dainty fingers and expressive face robbed it of all this, and loaned it a grace all her own. During the many conversations we held on various themes, never once was I made conscious of the awkward medium we were using.

She was very fond of flowers, and especially so of lilies-of-the-valley. After I found this out, I managed to keep a vase filled

with fresh sprays setting on the base of the glass. Some evenings we would bring our chairs up very close and read short poems together. Her criticisms were remarkably acute in the discussions that followed the readings.

Thus we utilized every moment of time the mirror allowed us. We played games when other things became monotonous. And means were always devised to do this, despite the intervention of the mirror.

"I have not been feeling at all well of late," she said one night, during a game of chess.

"You should have told me that before," I reproved. "Perhaps we had best give up the game for the present."

"Suppose we do. I have had such a splitting headache all day. Let us talk instead; I feel too languid for mental exertion."

The next night she was no better; and the night following that much worse. I was very much concerned, but what was there I could do? If I only had the answer to my letter! It was too soon for that, though, and besides, would it make any difference in the present case? I really thought it would; but after sober judgment, I couldn't see how. I had entered so enthusiastically into the events of the past few weeks that they had become real to me, forgetting for the time being their actual singularity. Now that singularity was cropping out again to puzzle me anew.

On the third, fourth and fifth nights I did not see her at all, though I saw that which caused me more concern. About nine o'clock each night two gentlemen came into the room and held earnest conversations for perhaps five minutes. One, a fussy little man, had a black case in his hand, and I took him for the doctor. The other, from his strong resemblance to my mirror girl, was undoubtedly her father. It was quite evident they saw nothing out of the ordinary in the glass, for several times they looked towards it, and their faces never changed. Here was another of those queer things that could not be explained.

I saw her again on the sixth night. Though her face was flushed as with fever, and her eyes unnaturally bright, yet I never saw her look more beautiful. She wore a low neck, sleeveless gown, made of a sheer black material. Her manner was so strange and excitable that I was prompted to ask immediately, "Are you

sure you are doing a wise thing by coming down tonight? Perhaps it would have been better to wait until tomorrow."

"Yes, I know, but the doctor says I'm worse, and perhaps I can't come down tomorrow. They'll never know — every one is out except the servants. Please don't object; something told me I must come down. I don't know why. Besides, I want to sing. Oh! I have some beautiful songs I want to sing to you. That's the way I feel tonight, as if I must sing and play, I have such glorious music running in my head. I know you can't hear, but you must feel it as I feel it; one can't help feeling such music, it fairly vibrates with the exquisite passions of love and death and hope. Oh! please sit where you are while I sing to you of all this."

It seemed an age she sat at the piano, and I looked on as one in a dream. How I would have liked to have heard that voice! Sweet it must have been, and clear as a silver bell. On and on she sang and played, the delirium of fever and the passion of music every moment growing stronger. And I could do nothing. It was like seeing a beautiful bird sing itself to death. I knocked on the glass, and cursed it and the people who had not kept a better watch over her. But to no effect. At last, however, she was compelled to stop for lack of strength. I thought she would faint when she got up from the piano stool. How I longed to take her by the arm and lead her, or call for help. But she recovered herself and tottered over to the door. She had barely enough strength left to talk deaf and dumb. Leaning against the door jamb, she could only manage this much very slowly: "I do hope you felt my songs, they were really very, very beautiful — all about love and hope — I left death out, it is so sad, and one doesn't want to be sad when one isn't well. I'm not feeling quite so well as I was a few minutes ago. I think I will try and get up-stairs now. You will not mind me leaving the sad part out, will you? Good night." With a sweet but wan smile on her face, she threw me a kiss, then helped herself through the door by holding the curtain.

It is needless to say that this last incident left me in a somewhat dazed condition. During the next six nights, I saw the doctor and her father in the mirror nightly, and with them was a

tall, stern-looking man, evidently another doctor. I inferred from their general demeanor that it was a consultation, and that the state of their patient's health was very critical. On the sixth night, the man I took for her father broke down. I could see he was pleading with the doctors.

The suspense and anxiety were beginning to tell on my nerves. I could not sleep when I went to bed, or work at the office during the day. To cap the climax, for four nights the mirror failed to develop its strange phenomenon. Once I sat up all night waiting for the appearance of the frost spot, but without results. The glass gave back nothing but the natural reflection of my library. I feared I was never to see my mirror girl again. But I was, the next night, for the last time.

The frost spot appeared when I had almost given up hope. It cleared away, and I saw it was daytime in the parlor with which I had become so familiar, but the shades must have been drawn down, for the room was dark. I could see almost nothing at first. Presently, however, a bright little beam of sunshine peeped in — from around the side of the shades, I suppose — and fell upon an odd-shaped piece of furniture that slightly resembled a sofa. No doubt it was new, as I had never seen it before. Yes, I was sure it was intended as a sofa: some one was lying on it. A draught of air must have blown the shade open a little more. The sun came in quite strong and shone full on the reclining figure. Why! it was my mirror girl! I was so glad she was able to be down-stairs again. Her face had a sweet smile of repose. The little rogue! she was pretending she was asleep just to fool me. Very well, while she was playing her little joke, I could content myself looking at her. She wore the same black gown as she had worn the night she was so sick, and fixed in the corsage was a spray of lilies-of-the-valley. It did seem strange that she should wear an evening gown during the day, but I took this as another of her fanciful whims. There were lots of other flowers around too. I had not noticed that before. Perhaps they were from thoughtful friends. But there were so many of them! And what was that above her head on the sofa? surely not a wreath! Yes, and of immortels. One doesn't give wreaths of immortels to recovered invalids. Then she wasn't joking, after all.

Slow as I had been to grasp the significance of all these things, I understood now. She would never wake up and laugh at me. No, she was dead — dead. I dashed at the mirror. I would break through that cursed thing at last, and throw myself down by her side and tell her she must wake up and speak to me — speak to me in the voice I had never heard.

This is the last thing I remember clearly. There is a faint recollection of the sound of breaking glass, and of a confusion and many voices afterward, but that is all.

For a whole month I was prostrated with brain fever. The nurse tells me I have had a very hard fight for my life. I am convalescing now, however. This morning, for the first time, I was allowed to look over the large quantity of mail that has accumulated during the time I was sick. One of the first letters I got hold of bore the postmark, Cairo, Egypt. I opened it at once, and found it to be the answer to the letter I had sent in care of the storage and trust company. I will only quote what most applies in the present case.

"What you tell me is most remarkable. The mirror is unquestionably the one that formerly belonged to me. The nick you speak of in the marble on the left-hand corner of the base identifies it without a doubt. It was caused by the fall of a heavy pedestal. Your description is in reality an inventory of the parlor in my old house. As for the rest, I cannot pretend to understand it. Feature by feature, you have given me in your letter an exact picture of my youngest daughter, Geraldine. It was very sad for me to read. The flower of my flock, she died five years ago."

Helen's Bridge of Sighs.*

BY MARION SHORT.

HELEN nibbled the handle of her pen. She was satisfied that she had begun her letter to Elbert brilliantly, but in spite of all her efforts the closing sentences sounded flat and unemotional. At last she dropped her pen with a discouraged sigh. A sad and hollow-eyed face looked back at her from the little mirror set into the wood above her desk. Helen gazed at her reflection with increasing self-pity, and entirely forgot her late struggle with stubborn words. Ah, if she could only weep just a little — she was sure she looked sad enough to weep — and a tear should accidentally splash upon the letter she was writing, how the sight of that pathetic smudge would wring Elbert's heart when she was dead and gone! For Helen had decided that to punish Elbert properly she must die; yes, die of a broken heart.

Her mind traveled on to her funeral, and Elbert, standing pale and still, looking down upon that sweet, angelic face for the last time. At this poignant picture the longed-for tears came rushing down her cheeks as in answer to a summons, but instead of striking the note paper as appreciative, well-behaved tears should, one drop of Helen's anguish fell, with a plunk of misery, into the ink, and another clung to the end of her nose; and when she wagged to shake it on to the paper, flew off into space somewhere — utterly wasted. She glanced again at what she had written.

> DEAREST ELBERT:
>
> This letter will not be delivered to you until I am dead and gone. I leave it as a token of my forgiveness. For I do forgive you freely, fully, and I forgive her too, — the woman who has come between us. You did not know it, but I saw you with my own eyes out driving

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with her last Tuesday week. I recognized her by her blonde hair, and that was the last straw. So now you will understand why I have returned unopened all the letters you have written since, along with your ring. And oh, the bitterness of knowing that, while my heart is broken, to you, perhaps, it has all meant little or nothing. "Love is of man's life a thing apart, 't is woman's whole existence." But do not fear reproaches, — these are the last words I shall ever write.

Helen paused and looked up at the clock. How slow Lizzie was about preparing tea! She meant to write that very day and inform Aunt Sue of her heedlessness, and how she invariably ran out of waffle dough just when one was getting up an appetite. But oh, heavens! What were waffles to this ceaseless pain at her heart, and Elbert and she parted forever?

Helen gathered up her unfinished letter and trailed for the dozenth time in the last ten minutes to the window commanding a view of the apartment next door. What demon had possessed Elbert to take up bachelor quarters right across the way?

Only a breathing-room space separated the two walls of the adjoining buildings. She could see quite plainly between the blowing curtains of the window across the extremely narrow, but five-story deep chasm, and she beheld again on the mantel shelf the Delft smoking set she had given Elbert on his last birthday, and on the sofa the Princeton pillow that she of the golden locks had presented on the same momentous occasion. Yes, Helen mused, blonde girls were treacherous,— treacherous and mischief making. There was the dent of a head in the depths of that satin pillow, as if Elbert had burrowed there caressingly by the hour. She was glad now, doubly glad, that she had broken her engagement. And yet — she pushed back her curtain and leaned farther out of the window. Elbert, she knew, was at business, so she could gaze at his belongings to her heart's content, and she wanted to see if her picture were still in the bracket frame with his own. Yes, there it was — and at that moment there came a rude gust of wind which blew the letter she was holding out of her hand in a jiffy, made it turn curiously in the air, like to a tumbler at a circus, and then whisked it comically through the window opposite, where it sank and disappeared from view.

A few seconds later a young woman, with a tear-stained face and ink-stained fingers, appeared at the door of the Bruce Bachelor Apartments.

"I want to go up to Mr. Graham's rooms for just a second. I —I left something there," quoth she to the bashful, sandy-haired young man at the desk in the office.

"Left something there? Excuse me, Miss, but I think you must be mistaken. Mr. Graham has only lived here two days, and outside of the moving man and the scrub lady there hasn't been a caller."

"I didn't mean that. I meant that something blew across from my window in the Aldine next door and went through the window opposite — Mr. Graham's window. It was nothing much — only I wouldn't have him see it for the world," explained Helen, blushing furiously.

The modest young man blushed in sympathy. Even his hair seemed to glow.

"Something you wouldn't want him to see — I — Oh, yes — pardon me, I understand," he gasped, while his mind traveled with lightning rapidity over all possible and impossible articles of woman's apparel

"Gracious!" exclaimed Helen, her confusion greater than her listener's,— "I didn't mean anything like that. I meant my hat, you know, and I want to go after it."

The bashful young man recovered his composure. "Oh, your hat! Why, if it's just your hat, kindly take a seat for a moment. I'll ask the janitor for a pass key and go get it for you."

"But it isn't a hat," stammered Helen. "I — I just said that. It's something I must get myself, and you must let me into the room for it and no one else. If any one should find out my secret — Oh, please, please let me into the room. It's — it's a matter of life and death!"

The bashful young man began to feel frightened. The young woman's hair was disheveled, and there was a strange gleam in her eye; and disheveled hair and strange gleams usually were the hall marks of insanity, were they not?

"Um — er, now don't get excited, lady, it will be all right," he remarked soothingly, as he ran his fingers through his sallow

lambrequin of hair and backed toward the janitor's quarters. "We'll surely see that you recover your — it. Just make yourself at home for a moment."

And the timid, yet wary youth, disappeared into unknown regions of the great apartment house.

Helen sat bolt upright in a throne-like hall chair and kicked her heels impatiently on the marble floor. If Elbert found that letter she should go mad, distracted, wild, crazy! Now, wherever had that insipid clerk gone to? Oh, yes, to find the janitor and get the pass key. Nearly five o'clock! Sometimes Elbert left the office as early as five. What if he should come in and find her here? Very well then, she would demand the return of her letter. "Oh, yes," Elbert would say, in that even tone which meant a will as unyielding as iron, "but first I must read it. It is in my room, and addressed to me, and therefore is plainly my property." Helen pictured herself standing tense and agonized as he read and then — and then — of course she'd be right there before him without even a bad cold or a pimple on her nose to call for sympathy when she had announced herself as dead, and it would be just like him to laugh.

Helen looked about her. She might kill herself, and be found lying across the threshold of Elbert's apartment, but one could not very well kill oneself with an ink bottle, a paper weight, or a cuspidor, and these were the only murderous articles that seemed available. Besides, such a death would not be romantic, and if one could not perish romantically it were better to live on, despite heartbreaks and other unpleasant things. "Anyhow," Helen murmured, "What's the use of my planning suicide, when I wrote I was going to die of a broken heart? But I can't die of a broken heart at a moment's notice. It would take me three or four months at least. Five minutes after five! Will that molasses-colored fiend never return?"

And meanwhile the molasses-colored fiend was listening with bated breath to the janitor. That important official's face was ludicrously suggestive of the composite lineaments of a judge and an ape. "Take me wurrud for it," said he, "the woman's his wife, and he's no more a bachelor than I am this minute. Wants her hat? Wants nothin'. She's afther goin' and turnin' things

upside down in his room to find fortygraphs of the gurruls he's been flirtin' wid, or love letthers they've been writin' him, and if she goes up there it's trouble for him, yes, and trouble for you and for me. For she'll have the two of us up in the divorce court to testify."

"But tell me for the love of goodness what I'm to do," entreated the young man. "I promised her a pass key."

"Well, I've lost it. I don't know where it is, and I was never good at guessin'. Tell her that for me."

"But I can't bluff it out like that."

The janitor was dogmatic.

"Then it's the goin' to court and gettin' no pay nor no thanks for it, and gettin' your picture in the paper that'll make you look like the rogues' gallery, and the jury disagreein' and keepin' you there to repeat your testimony, and comin' back here to find another man holdin' down your good job."

The shy young man confronted Helen once more. She eyed him with the expression of a dog looking for a bone.

"Very sorry Mrs. — I mean Miss, but you see we've mislaid our janitor — I mean he's lost the key, and you'll have to wait until Mr. Graham comes in ——"

"Oh, dear! Don't tell me that. I must get into that apartment somehow. We'll break down the door, that's it! You have those nice, red-handled firemen's axes in the hall, haven't you?"

"Any wan that touches wan does so over me dead body!" announced the janitor, suddenly appearing from behind a door with the look of one who had dwelt there always for the express purpose of defending red-handled axes. "And you'll excuse me, lady, for sayin' it, but it ain't often that a lady as young as yourself, and as Christian lookin', wants to break in a gintleman's door wid an axe."

"But you don't understand. I'll pay for the axe and the door and — and everything. Oh, all I want is a letter addressed to Mr. Graham, a letter written by a foolish woman. and I don't see why you should make it so hard for me."

"A letther?" repeated the janitor triumphantly, as he turned to the open-mouthed clerk. "Didn't I tell you she was afther a letther? You can't get it from me, Ma'am, and it's no use tryin'

to intimidate this young man here, for I'm the boss when it comes to pass keys and the like, and that's an end of it. You want to get us into trouble wid your husband, do yez?"

"He's not my husband. We're no longer on speaking terms. We've parted forever and — Oh, you're a common, low individual. I can never make you comprehend the situation. What shall I do? I must, I will manage to get into that apartment somehow."

The clerk assumed a conciliating expression, and endeavored to speak, but the janitor waved him into silence, and with feet wide apart, and arms folded, delivered his ultimatum to the troublesome young woman.

"Well, if you go to a lawyer and buy phwat they call a writ of happy corpses and bring it here and summons me, maybe we can find the key, but not till then." He gave a wise wink at the clerk, who opened an account book at the wrong place and began scribbling desperately. Helen tilted her chin in scorn of them both and swept proudly through the door, but the moment she was outside she began to weep in good earnest. The elevator boy looked curiously at her as he carried her to the fifth floor of the Aldine. Her face was buried in her handkerchief, and she gave a short, sharp series of what sounded like incipient sneezes. But the elevator boy knew they were not sneezes but sobs. Helen was his adored goddess, although he had kept his passion a secret from her and from the world, and fierce anger thrilled him. Who had dared to wring that tender heart? Let him beware! There was a strong right arm to defend her. And he glared so fiercely at the sweet old lady who entered the elevator on the eighth story that she wondered if that quarter she had given him the day before could have been bad.

Once more Helen stood gazing across at the Princeton pillow and other Elbertian belongings, so near and yet so far. "Why, one could almost jump across," she said to herself; and then looked at the asphalt pavement five stories below, and shuddered. "If I could only rig up some kind of a line and hook — but I suppose the hook would catch in everything but that awful letter. Oh, why was I ever such an idiot as to write it? I never meant to send it, I know now I didn't. And if he gets it I'll be obliged to die or live a ridiculous life ever after, and I've just made up my

mind I won't die, so there. Now if I could fix up some kind of a rope ladder out of the clothes line — but how could I secure the other end to his window?"

All at once she gave a little squeal of ecstasy, and ran toward the kitchen. Almost immediately she reappeared, dragging out a long ironing board, and stood it on end by the window. "It's long enough, I know. I scolded Lizzie for bringing it from the country, it was so perfectly huge." She peered down the long alleyway toward the street. "Nobody ever looks up, and it's getting dark, and anyhow I must get that letter."

While she thought she worked, and soon there lay from window to window a straight and narrow road, gleaming like snow in its fresh linen sheath, a bridge of sighs between her drawing room and Elbert's. Helen began the transit in a spirit of daring, sliding sideways, quickly but carefully along. But midway across the chasm she happened to glance down the long alleyway toward the street, and there was Elbert, with a strange man, heading in the direction of the Bruce Apartment House. He did not happen to glance in her direction, but his face and the realization of the loftiness of her perch almost overcame her for a moment. Her toes curled in curiously, sickeningly, and she felt as if she were going to take a dizzy header into the uncongenial depths below. But directly Elbert would enter the Bruce, they would tell him about his strange lady visitor, and — and — no, he must not find that letter. Another sideways wiggle, a swish of white skirts, and she dropped inside the young man's window with a big sigh of relief. She glanced hastily about. Old time objects everywhere. Did she not know every stick of that familiar and once well-loved furniture? Amidst it that horrid Princeton pillow looked entirely out of place, a hideous incongruity. As Helen picked up her exasperating letter with one hand, she reached with the other for the offending pillow. "I'll just drop it out of the window, and the ash man will take it away in the morning." She rushed for the window and gave the pillow a nervous, energetic shove across the ledge. Horrors! She had jostled the end of the ironing board! There was a sharp, cracking sound, and Helen knew that her bridge lay broken on the asphalt five stories below!

A few minutes later Mr. Elbert Graham entered his apartment,

accompanied by his friend, Jack Saunders. "Make yourself at home, Jack," he began cordially. "I haven't succeeded in feeling at home myself as yet, but every familiar old thing I see around, like yourself, for instance, takes off the curse of strangeness a little. Just spread out on the couch there — why, where is that Princeton pillow? By Jove, it's gone!"

"Perhaps you haven't unpacked it yet," suggested Jack.

"Unpacked it this very morning, and put it there on the couch myself."

"Proved too strong a temptation for one of the maid-servants then, old chap, that's the explanation. You'd better see if there isn't something else missing," and Jack sauntered over to the window to let up the shade. Elbert opened the door of a closet. Jack heard the click of the electrics that illumined its dark depths. Then he glanced outside, and saw through the fast gathering twilight the orange and black square of a Princeton pillow lying in the narrow alleyway below. Alongside of it was something resembling an uprooted tombstone. "Come here, Elbert, what's that lying down yonder? Looks like somebody had fired your pillow out of the window at a graveyard."

"Oh, that?" answered Elbert in a strange, faint, far-away voice. "That's nothing at all, for I've just found her in the closet. The pillow, I mean." Then his tones became charged with sudden energy. "Sorry to hurry you off, Jack, but I have a pressing appointment — a very pressing appointment. Forgot it till this minute. I have to catch a train, I mean send a telegram at once. Porter's in the hall now waiting for my trunk. Haven't a moment to lose, and it's too good to be true. You don't mind, Jack? I'll be around to the club tonight and explain it all."

As he talked Elbert handed the bewildered Jack his hat and cane, and taking him by the arm fairly shoved him out of the door. Jack turned an amazed face toward his inhospitable host. "Elbert, old chap, you go to bed. You have on a jag; — plain case and worst I ever saw. Go to bed and sleep it off. Why, you don't any more have to send a telegram than you have to start for Africa, and as for the porter ——" Elbert shut the door in his face unheedingly. Then he strode straight for the closet. "Come out here," he said sternly.

A very shame-faced young woman with bowed head and a tell-tale letter comfortably stowed away in the folds of her bodice, glided softly into the middle of the room.

"Oh, Elbert, I am so ashamed of myself. 'Twas I who stole the pillow."

"What in heaven's name do I care for that old pillow? Cousin Sally can make me another one." Helen interrupted him hysterically.

"But she's not your cousin, you know she's not. She's too good-looking for a cousin."

"She is my cousin," reiterated Elbert, sternly. "I explained repeatedly in the letters you returned unopened. But why talk of cousins? Why talk of anything but the fact that you have repented, that you have come to me of your own sweet will to tell me so. Is it not true, Helen?"

Helen's face became radiant. What a lovely explanation of her presence there! Why had she not thought of it herself?"

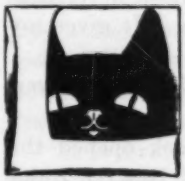
"Yes, dear," she breathed softly as she felt Elbert's arms close about her in the old, familiar, delightful fashion, "Yes, dear, I came because I repented, and I stayed because ——" she glanced back toward the bridgeless chasm — "I stayed because I could not help myself."

A handsome, well-groomed young man, and a hatless but dazzlingly happy young woman came down in the elevator of the Bruce Apartment House just as the clock struck six. They were going out for dinner together. The janitor, broom in hand, was standing in front of the desk, talking with the clerk, who was standing, with pen in hand, behind it. Suddenly the broom clattered to the floor, and the pen struck and rolled off the desk. As Helen passed, two open mouths and four popping eyes asked one great question of her as loud as words could speak. "How did you ever get into that apartment?"

Helen replied to the question sweetly, condescendingly, looking back over Elbert's shoulder: "Through the keyhole," said she.

Lanfranc.*

BY E. A. COOK.



LANFRANC was seated on the bar at McGill's tavern, smoking a cigarette. McGill had gone to the window and was looking out across the prairie. "There's some one coming this way," he said. "Too far out to tell who he is."

Lanfranc waved the smoke away from before his face. "You have not the eagle eye, McGill. I have seen him since he pass the Big Stone. It is Sergeant Mack."

McGill turned quickly. "That means you, then," he said. "I told you they would get word to the Post before morning. But you are always so cock-sure, you wouldn't start for the lower cut last night, as I wanted you to. But come on. Your horse is saddled. I fixed him up this morning. Perhaps you can get off behind the ridge, before he spots you. I'll hold him here as long as I can and give you a chance to ride for it."

McGill started for the side door, but seeing that Lanfranc did not move, he faced around again. "Come on, man!" he cried, "Good God! I don't want to see you hang."

Lanfranc calmly blew out a puff of smoke. "I have seen fat men like you, who drink too much of the white wine, and sit down all the time, die, when they get too much excite'. They choke all the same as when they hang." And he laughed ironically.

McGill grew red in the face. It is bad enough when you are trying to help a man save his life to have him laugh at you for your pains, but when he throws in a sneer at your personal appearance, it is unbearable.

"Well, you can hang, and be damned," he snorted.

"Merci," replied Lanfranc. "But I t'ink you had better hide the whiskey that came las' night. Men do not hang for that, but I t'ink you not like to have Sergeant Mack fin' it."

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McGill was already behind the bar, pushing bottles labelled ginger-ale, syrup, etc., into more prominent positions, and gathering up several bottles of more suspicious appearance.

"I t'ink," went on Lanfranc, as McGill started for the side door, "you bes' stay out there for 'bout half hour. I'll try amuse the Sergeant."

McGill stopped with his hand on the door. "Look here, Lanfranc," he said, "I won't have any more shooting. It gives my place a bad name."

Lanfranc laughed. "Sacre! the good McGill. I'll be ver' careful of your good name."

Lanfranc was still smiling when Sergeant Mack opened the door, and he waved his hand gayly in greeting. "Has the Rider of the Law come to taste McGill's sweet-water?" he asked, throwing his thumb back over his shoulder at the row of bottles.

A flicker of a smile came over Sergeant Mack's face, as he caught sight of the aggressively innocent display. But it died away as he walked up to where Lanfranc sat.

"No," he replied. "We will look after that some other time. I came after you."

Lanfranc's eyes met the Sergeant's insolently. "Bien," he said, "I am here, I am not like McGill's whiskey to run into the ground when the Rider of the Law pleases to ride this way."

Sergeant Mack did not appear to notice the irony of Lanfranc's tone. "Well," he said, "Are you ready to start?"

Lanfranc slipped swiftly off the bar. "Mon Ami," he said, "you are a damn brave man, yes! So when I say that I have the wish to speak to you for the time of a pipe first, I do not say I could kill you before you move your hand, if you say 'no.' I say: 'It is my wish,' and you——" Lanfranc finished with a wave of his hand.

Sergeant Mack knew that Lanfranc spoke the truth. Lanfranc could kill him as the lightning strikes, for the man's swiftness with his gun was a proverb on the plains. Yet it was not fear that made him nod his head in assent to Lanfranc's questioning gaze. He knew Lanfranc and liked him, as much as a man with his clear-cut idea of life could like a careless adventurer of Lanfranc's stamp. He knew also that Lanfranc would not have made

such a request unless he had something important to tell, and although it was his place to execute and not to judge, there could be no harm in hearing what the man had to say.

The smile flashed out again in Lanfranc's face, when he saw the Sergeant nod his head.

"Bien, Mon Ami," he said, "Brave men do not kill each other without reason. Is it not so? Let us sit down." He led the way across the room to a long bench in front of the stove. Sergeant Mack seated himself across it, and Lanfranc faced him, politely offering him his tobacco. The Sergeant declined it. Lanfranc rolled a cigarette and lighted it.

"It is seven winters," he began, "since you and I were on the trail together, and much has happened. But, I t'ink, you know me well enough to know that Lanfranc is not what the good priest would call pious — no! I never go to the church. I have not confess since I was a boy. I play cards too much, and too good — perhaps. But no one has said to my face that I cheat — but once. They say I am too quick with my gun, as las' night. But no one can say that Lanfranc is a coward, or that he speak lies, or that he break the faith of the trail and the camp fire. No! And no one can say that he has seen Lanfranc drunk, or" — Lanfranc inhaled a deep draught of cigarette smoke and fastened his eyes on the Sergeant's face — "or, no one can say that Lanfranc has made life like hell for a woman. No! He is not good, but he has live clean. Is it not so, Mon Ami?"

Sergeant Mack nodded his head. Lanfranc's vices and virtues were clear cut, and their possessor had stated them as they were.

Lanfranc threw away his cigarette. "Patience, Mon Ami. I will speak quick. Two winters after we part at Lacolle, I go to a place in the Great Hills. Hunting was good, and I like the place so well, I mos' t'ink I would build me a shack and stay for the res' of my life. There was no one roun' but the Indians, 'cept one white man, who had put up a cabin in a little place where the wood open out on the hill, and a little brook come singing 'chur, chur, chur,' down to the valley. I do not know what he do there, but it was like heaven to sit, and see the sun come out on the black wood.

"The man call himself Burton, — and I do not like him. He was made for the town, not for the forest. But he had a girl ——"

Lanfranc waved his hand at Sergeant Mack, who had half started up.

"Sit still! Yes! I know you have known her, and she was like the wild flower, is it not so? Great Bear had name her 'South Wind.' And it was a good name. Her smile was sof' like the spring, and her eyes were all the same as the blue flower, the Sun-star, that came up under the snow. I have never lof' any woman, and I not lof' her, but I feel like a good man when she smile on me. I t'ink she see that Lanfranc was not all bad, for she was ver' good to me. Once when I twis' my foot in the snow-shoe, and the pain was like hell, she fix it up in wet cloth with some salve. I think it was more the touch of her cool hand, but the pain go.

"Well, one day, when I come back from the hunt, I bring a couple of pine-chicks for her. When I get to the cabin I fin' a strange man there. He was good to look at, yes! But I not like his eyes. You can tell mos' things from the eyes, if you know when to look.

"He had some great plan to get gold from the brook, and I see the father already had the lust for riches in his face. They dig all the time by the water, and the girl talk and laugh with the stranger. I tell her one day what I t'ink about him, but she laugh at me. You know how those t'ings go — she t'ink all men as good as herself. One has to have a little piece of hell in him, before he see the bad in the res'!

"Well, one time I feel like a change, and I go on a long trip. I shoot much and see many strange t'ings and live as a man should live. But at las', I feel somet'ing tell me to turn roun' and go back. So I start on the back trail. One morning I see the smoke of a camp fire, and I fin' Great Bear and his tribe hunting buffalo.

"Great Bear, he tell me somet'ing about South Wind that make me strike him. But Great Bear know that I strike not him, but the words, and he give me two fresh horses, and tell me when I have done what I have to do, where I should fin' him, so that the

blow might be wipe' out. Then we shake hands like men and I ride on.

"In t'ree day I ride what I would ride in seven at other time. When I reach the valley, I shoot one horse to put him out of pain. It was not nice, no! and it add a little grain to the devil that was in me.

"You have broke the stem of a wild-flower? Well, it was all the same. I t'ink she was glad to see me, but she was ver' weak. Her father was like mad, and he tell me that he try to get the priest from the new post, for the girl wish to have the blessing of the church. But the priest he shrug his shoulders and refuse to come.

"I take the two horses of Burton and go to the Post. The priest say 'No' again, but I say 'Yes!' and drop my hand on his shoulder. The good priest was fat like McGill, and not used to ride, so I strap him on the big horse. We come fas', and I t'ink he was sore, when we get to the valley, for he was ver' sof'! But we were in time, and I have no care but for that.

"The next day we bury her by the brook she lof', and I take my knife and make a cut on the handle of my gun. For what? I change t'ings about. One time in a mining camp a man who did not know me, show me his pistol handle. It was all cut with notches. He tell me he make a cut every time he kill a man. I t'ink he try to scare me. I laugh, for I do not like to see such men, and I say that the next cut he make in the handle I would kill him. For a minute he look as though he would shoot. Then he laugh as though I was mad. The next day he kill a young boy at a game of cards. I go to the place where he is, and remin' him of what I have said. That was the second time I have ever start a fight. Last night was the third.

"So I change t'ings about and make a cut on my pistol handle to show that I have *not* kill. For t'ree years I feel that cut and swear sof' to myself. I took many trails and I stay at many places, but the face I look for I did not see. Once a year I come here to McGill's, where the great trails to the North and West cross. The play is good and many people pass.

"Well, las' night, the place was full. You know how it is — much talk, much drink. But Lanfranc has no lof' to let the white

wine make a fool of him. So I stand one side, and drink one, two glass, — not much. By and by the door open and a man come in. He not see me, but I have no need of the white wine to make my blood run fas'. He been drinking, and he laugh an' wave his hand at the crowd, and tell McGill to fill up the glasses.

"Everybody ver' glad to drink with the stranger, but I take my glass and spill it on the floor before McGill's dog. He see what I do, and he turn quick, 'Damn,' he say, 'for what you do that?' I laugh and point where the dog has turn away. 'I think I had rather drink with McGill's dog than with you,' I say, and I smile in his face.

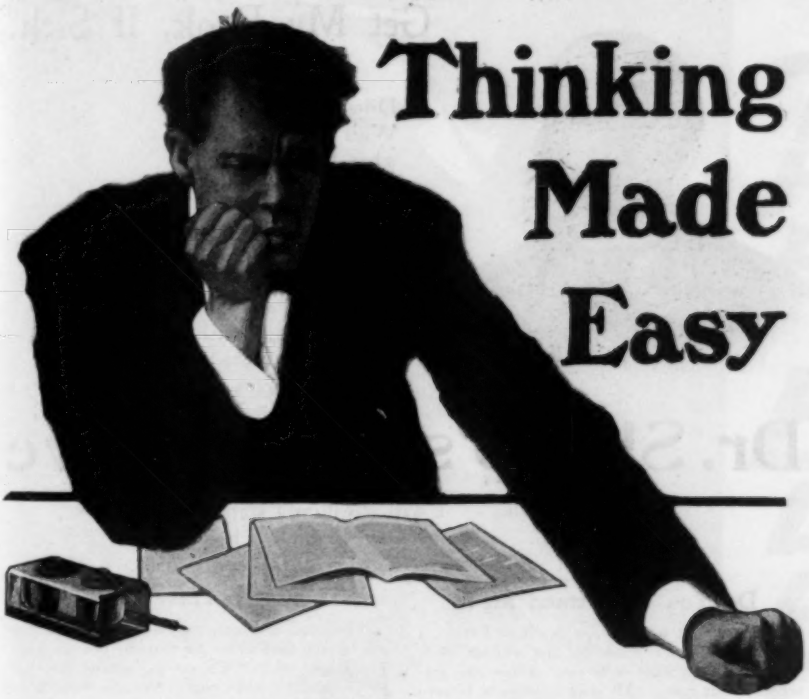
"Men say I am too quick to shoot, but even las' night, I give him much time. He had his gun out before I draw. Then I draw quick, but I have no fear, for it was my time. It was fate. Then I cut the notch smooth on my pistol handle. See! It feel damn good."

Lanfranc laid the pistol down on the bench before the other man. Sergeant Mack's hand went out mechanically to the pistol, and his fingers ran caressingly along the smooth cut in the wood. "Good! good!" he muttered half to himself.

Lanfranc's finger touched the back of the Sergeant's hand for a second. "Shall we go, Mon Ami?" he asked softly.

Sergeant Mack straightened up as if he were about to salute. "No, Lanfranc, damn it, no! I am more a man than this!" — and he touched the stripe on his sleeve.

Lanfranc's black eyes flashed with a brilliant smile. "You have the great heart, Mon Ami," he said simply. "I ride north tonight to keep the word with Great Bear."



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